



# Ribavirin treatment

## A patient guide

### **What is ribavirin?**

Ribavirin (VirazoleR) is a medicine used to treat people who have severe infections of the respiratory tract. A virus called respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can cause these infections.

### **Who develops RSV?**

RSV commonly causes respiratory infections in infants and children. But people of any age with weakened immune systems are at risk for RSV infection.

### **Can everyone with RSV receive ribavirin?**

People who have chronic lung diseases (such as asthma, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis) may not be able to receive ribavirin.

### **If I can receive ribavirin, how will it be given?**

Patients who can receive ribavirin usually receive it in aerosol form (as if they were getting oxygen.) This aerosol is delivered via a mask, tent, or mechanical ventilator. A device called a small particle aerosol generator delivers ribavirin.

Ribavirin is given 12 to 18 hours a day for 3 to 7 days. It is usually given between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. Sometimes it is given over a 3-hour period 3 times a day.

### **Are there side effects?**

You may have a sore throat, cough, rash, reddened eyes, or shortness of breath. Rarely, you might develop low blood pressure or a lowered heart rate.

### **Does ribavirin treatment pose a risk for my visitors or caregivers?**

Only patients who need ribavirin should have contact with it. Visitors who are pregnant, considering pregnancy, or breastfeeding should not visit you while you receive ribavirin.

Your caregivers will also take special measures to make sure they are not exposed to ribavirin.

- To make sure your caregivers have no contact with ribavirin, you will stay in a private room.
- When you receive ribavirin, the door to your room will be closed, and signs will be placed on your door to alert visitors and employees.
- Everyone who enters your room during and 10 minutes after your treatment must wear a disposable gown, gloves, and safety-seal eye goggles with a disposable mask or special respirator.

- Because ribavirin can escape and settle on surfaces such as sheets, tables, equipment, and walls, housekeeping staff will also wear protective equipment when cleaning your room.

## What else should I know?

Your caregivers will coordinate your care so that you have all the support you need during ribavirin treatment. If you have any questions about your ribavirin treatment, please feel free to ask your nurse.



2006

This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the NIH Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

Where applicable, brand names of commercial products are provided only as illustrative examples of acceptable products, and does not imply endorsement by NIH; nor does the fact that a particular brand name product is not identified imply that such product is unsatisfactory.

National Institutes of Health  
NIH Clinical Center  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Questions about the Clinical Center?  
[OCCC@cc.nih.gov](mailto:OCCC@cc.nih.gov)